

LIGN 4 | Winter 2003 ASL

1) arbitrariness

There is no relationship between the physical nature of the sign and the nature of the reality to which it refers.

2) displaced reference

It is possible to communicate about events removed in space and/or time from the immediate communicative situation.

3) segmentation/discreteness

There is a small set of primitive elements that clearly contrast with each other.

4) duality of patterning: meaning from meaningless elements

These primitive elements have no intrinsic meaning in themselves, but combine in different ways to form other elements (such as words) that do convey meaning.

5) productivity: new meaning from old elements

There is an infinite capacity to express and understand meaning by using a fixed set of elements to produce new meanings.

--> Since (4) and (5) are related, they can sometimes be lumped together as:

"combinatorial capacity"

6) transmission

While the system may have a biological component, it requires environmental (cultural) input to manifest.

7) standards of form

Combinations of segments adhere to standard patterns.

SIGN LANGUAGE:

1) arbitrariness (loss of transparent iconicity):

SHOES

EAT+BED -> HOME

SLOW vs. SLOW-very

2) displaced reference

spatial loci

3) segmentation/discreteness

4) duality of patterning

5) productivity

PHONOLOGY

There are four groups of features that make up a phoneme (i.e. segment).
Signs are made up of strings of segments:

o place of articulation: approximately 50

examples:

cheek - APPLE

temple - PARANOID

chin - RED

side of head - DREAM

neck - STUCK

shoulder - BOSS

upper arm - POWER

lower arm - IMPROVE

palm of hand - COOKIE

chest - FEEL

waist - RUSSIA

o handshape: approximately 150

composed of different numbers of fingers in combinations of:

open (HS:5 - SCHOOL, HS:1 - SMART)

closed (HS:A - BOAST)

hooked (HS:5 - COMB, HS:X - DENTIST)

flattened (HS:B - KNOW, HS:1 - OPPOSITE)

etc.

o orientation: approximately 15

5 planes plus hand part:

vertical plane - CLEAR/OBVIOUS

horizontal plane - SPILL

o movement: approximately 25

examples:

wiggling - COLOR

arc - COMPUTER

rubbing - DIRT

twisting - WHERE

hooking - CEREAL

releasing - SHIRK-RESPONSIBILITY

Examples of signs that differ only in one of these (minimal pairs):

place of articulation:

SMART SENSITIVE LUCKY

CUTE FUNNY RABBIT

POLITICS PHONOLOGY

handshape:

DONT-MIND DONT-CARE IGNORE
ROLLER-SKATE ICE-SKATE ROLLER-BLADE

orientation:

HORSE	RABBIT
SOCK	STAR
THING	CHILDREN

movement:

TEA	VOTE	
YOUNG	ANIMAL	TIRED

5) productivity

6) standards of form

MORPHOLOGY

a) inflectional morphology

o pronouns

singular (nom. and acc.) - point, HS:1

plural (nom. and acc.) - arc, HS:1

possessive - HS:B

reflexive - HS:A

o verbs and adjectives: continuous vs. iterative (repeated)

continuous: addition of a large, slow, circular movement

iterative: addition of a small, quick, repeated movement

SICK SICK-cont. SICK-rep.

ASK ASK-cont. ASK-rep.

EAT EAT-cont. EAT-rep.

WRONG WRONG-cont. WRONG-rep.

BOTHER BOTHER-cont. BOTHER-rep.

o adjectives: intensifiers

addition of hold at beginning of sign,
followed by sharp, quick release

SMART SMART-very

OLD OLD-very

TIRED TIRED-very
SLOW SLOW-very

o verb agreement:

A group of verbs can indicate subjects and objects through place of articulation, movement, and/or orientation.

place of articulation:

I WANT(near paper). 'I want that paper'

movement (with loci):

me-GIVE-him
she-GIVE-me
me-GIVE-all

me-ASK-her
she-ASK-me
me-ASK-all

orientation:

me-CRITICIZE-her
she-CRITICIZE-me

me-WARN-her
she-WARN-me

movement and orientation:

me-COPY-her
she-COPY-me

me-INSULT-her
she-INSULT-me

me-BLAME-her
she-BLAME-me

- can't have verb agreement with body-anchored verbs
(i.e. produced on or near the body)

LOVE, LIKE, ACCEPT, UNDERSTAND, SLEEP, BATHE, FEEL, APPLY, LEARN

- with verbs that can show agreement, verbs that have two different handshapes usually don't show agreement with 3rd plural object

CRITICIZE, FOOL, FORCE, HIT, NAG, TAKE-ADVANTAGE-OF, ADVISE, BITE, COPY

b) derivational morphology:

o agentive suffix - verb + AGENTIVE:

TEACH	TEACHER
LEARN	STUDENT
DANCE	DANCER
ACT	ACTOR
PREACH	PREACHER
WRITE	WRITER

o formation of deverbal nouns from verbs:

DRIVE	CAR
FLY	AIRPLANE
LOCK	KEY
SIT	CHAIR
SELL	STORE
EAT	FOOD

SYNTAX

c) topicalization:

Topic at beginning of sentence produced with raised eyebrows.
The topic can be a subject, an object, or a sentential clause.

†
CHOCOLATE ICE-CREAM I LIKE. (object topic)
'I like chocolate ice cream.'

†
DOG CAT LIKE. (OSV) (object topic)
'The cat likes the dog.'

(this cannot be SOV, because that order is ungrammatical)

†
CAT LIKE DOG. (subject topic)
'The cat likes the dog.'

†
LINGUISTICS CLASS I TAKE-UP I LOVE.
(clausal topic)
'I love the linguistics class I am taking.'

d) wh-questions - furrowed brows

wh-q
THAT MAN LIVE WHERE?
'Where does that man live?'

WHERE THAT MAN LIVE?

WHERE THAT MAN LIVE WHERE?

wh-q
HER GRANDMOTHER BORN WHEN?
'When was her grandmother born?'

wh-q
YOU PREFER COFFEE TEA WHICH?
'Which do you prefer, coffee or tea?'

† wh-q
YESTERDAY IX(there) LIBRARY, YOU MEET WHO?
'Who did you meet at the library yesterday?'

e) yes/no questions - raised brows [vs. statement]

y/n-q
HER MOTHER WELDER?
'Is her mother a welder?'

vs.

HER MOTHER WELDER.
'Her mother is a welder.'

(without the yes/no question facial expression, it is a statement)

y/n-q
APE LEARN SIGN CANT?
'Apes can't learn sign language?'

vs.

APE LEARN SIGN CANT'.
'Apes can't learn sign language.'